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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

6027th meeting

Tuesday, 2 December 2008, 11.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Jurica	(Croatia)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Ms. He Fen
	Costa Rica	Mr. Artiñano
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Williams
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2008/733)

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08-62886 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2008/733)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Fall to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Belgium.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country, document S/2008/733.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic, and His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Belgium. I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and to express my great pleasure at being in the Chamber once again, to introduce the latest report (S/2008/733) of the Secretary-General the situation in the Central African Republic. My statement will focus on major developments since July 2008 in the political, socio-economic, humanitarian, security and human rights areas. I shall also provide an overview of peacebuilding issues and the activities of the United Nations country team during the past six months.

Following a great deal of procrastination among the various parties, we are at last in a position today to give the Council good news: the upcoming holding of the inclusive political dialogue in the Central African Republic. The road to that event has been long and arduous; however, events accelerated significantly in recent weeks. The work of the political dialogue will begin on 5 December and will last for two weeks, through 20 December. That result has been made possible through the concerted efforts of the international community, which helped to remove the final obstacles and to get the parties concerned to agree to the holding of that long-awaited forum.

Taking advantage of the general amnesty law recently promulgated by President Bozizé, all key players in the political life of the Central African Republic are expected in Bangui to participate in the political dialogue, which the people of the country

want to be an inclusive process. In that regard, arrangements have been made, with the assistance of the regional force, the Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique, to provide security for all participants. At the moment, we expect about 40 participants from abroad, including former President Ange Félix Patassé, who has lived in exile in Lomé since the coup d'état of 15 March 2003; Mr. Jean-Jacques Demafouth, former Minister for Defence and Chairman of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la Démocratie, who has lived in exile since 2002; as well as others, such as Messrs. Mekassoua, N'Goupandé, Miskine and Massi.

I should like to pay special tribute here to the tireless efforts of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, whose personal involvement has been decisive in achieving these results. I should also like to acknowledge the perseverance of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has continuously encouraged the highest officials of the Central African Republic to take the decisive step towards political dialogue. I should also like in particular to note the efforts of President Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, which provided assistance in carrying out our mandate to facilitate the process. I would also like to welcome the multifaceted support and guidance of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States.

Today we are on the eve of a political forum that will consider the recommendations of the Dialogue Preparatory Committee dealing with pivotal questions posing the greatest challenges facing the Central African Republic, namely, political and governance issues, armed groups and the security situation and socio-economic development.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, the period under consideration was marked above all by sustained efforts to finalize preparations for the holding of the inclusive political dialogue. The major impediment pertained to the issue of the general amnesty law promulgated by the head of State of the Central African Republic on 13 October 2008. This law provided amnesty for all offences committed by various individuals in the Central African Republic, except for crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. However, the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la Démocratie and the Union des forces vives de la nation (UFVN), which include the great majority of the opposition parties, have expressed serious reservations regarding this law, which they consider to be unrealistic, limiting and not in keeping with what had been recommended by the Preparatory Committee and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In recent months, therefore, attention was focused on how to break the deadlock caused by the general amnesty law.

In that regard, the Follow-up Committee to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 21 June has already held three meetings in Libreville to assess progress made in the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement and to consider disputed points resulting from differing interpretations of the Peace Agreement.

During the third meeting, held in Libreville on 19 November 2008, a framework document was adopted to promote the process of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of elements of political-military groups. I should like to emphasize the commitment of France, as demonstrated by its financial contribution to the DDR process and to invite the international community to provide financial support for this operation.

On 26 October, the Government of the Central African Republic announced the release of 12 prisoners of the rebel groups ARPD, the Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain (MLPC) and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 21 June. The release of prisoners was a significant gesture, demonstrating the commitment of the Central African Republic Government to the implementation of the Libreville Agreement.

To avoid the disputes which arose repeatedly whenever basic texts were adopted, we offered facilitation between the Government and the opposition in order to ease the remaining difficulties. These contacts made it possible to reach consensus on the composition of the Dialogue Preparatory Committee and to receive proposals for the names of four individuals who could chair the political dialogue. The final choice was the former President of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, who will assume the chairmanship of the inclusive political dialogue. President Buyoya is expected in Bangui this evening or tomorrow. At this stage, we can say that we are beginning the final phase before the actual holding of the inclusive political dialogue.

It is significant that the uncertainty in the political process over the past six months has had an overall negative impact on the security situation, in particular in the north-west provinces of the country. Several clashes have been reported between APRD elements and Government forces in several locations. This has led both parties to accuse each other of ceasefire violations. Aside from several isolated clashes in a few zones in north-western Vakaga, involving dissident groups of the UFDR, and the recent ambush of dissident rebels of Miskine's Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) on 11 November, which cost the lives of about a dozen Government soldiers, the ceasefire between Government forces and the UFDR and FDPC has, in general, been respected.

In the socio-economic sphere, the country is continuing to face multifaceted challenges. Social tension linked to salary arrears remains a source of major concern despite recent efforts by the Government to pay off those arrears. Trade union leaders have issued an ultimatum that these would be strikes at the beginning of next year if the remaining four months of arrears are not paid by then.

In the economic sector, relative progress has been noted in the mining sector with the withdrawal, by the Ministry of Mines, of the permits of several companies which appear not to have honoured their contractual obligations. Nevertheless, a great deal still remains to be done to clean up this sector and ensure transparency in the exploitation of natural resources.

In the human rights field, the situation over the past six months continues to be of concern. Several cases of summary or extrajudicial executions have been noted in the conflict zones. Despite the signing of the Libreville Agreement, APRD elements in the field continue to carry out atrocities in areas under their control, including extrajudicial executions, pillaging, racketeering and forced enlistment of young villagers into self-defence groups or as informants.

Clashes between the APRD and the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) have resulted in massive displacement of people and have exacerbated insecurity. Reports of alleged atrocities perpetuated by highway bandits known as zaraguinas, poachers and dissident rebel groups, as well as reported cases of extrajudicial executions, continue to be a source of concern.

We also wish to point out that the national defence and security forces are also accused of human rights abuses. Within the framework of its mandate, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) recently issued its first report on human rights in the Central African Republic.

On the operational level, the country team continues to make commendable efforts in the humanitarian sectors, in combating HIV/AIDS and in mobilizing resources to build up operational capacity given the country's colossal needs.

In the period under review, the United Nations has continued to work closely with the authorities of the Central African Republic to establish structures and mechanisms within the framework of the Peacebuilding Fund to consider the immediate needs of the Central African Republic in priority areas. These include the security sector reform, good governance and the rule of law, in addition to the revitalization of communities affected by the conflict.

With $10 million allocated by the Fund, the National Steering Committee has approved 11 of the 26 projects submitted to it by the technical committee established to this end. In the meantime, the Peacebuilding Commission is continuing to work on a strategic framework designed to serve as a basis for its commitment to the Central African Republic. To this end, it held its second meeting of the Central African Republic configuration on 8 October 2008 in New York and undertook its second visit to the Central African Republic, from 30 October to 6 November 2008. During that visit, it organized several meetings with key development partners and with United Nations agencies to discuss peacebuilding priorities and other related issues.

A mission was dispatched, led with professionalism and dedication by Ambassador Grauls of Belgium — whom I welcome, and who will be joining us later for the opening of the dialogue. We look forward to welcoming him to Bangui once again.

The three priorities identified by the mission are security sector reform, good governance and the rule of law, and the establishment of development poles. In our view, those three pillars can foster a climate of stability for relaunching economic activities and for combating the extreme poverty in which people are languishing.

Regarding a review of the United Nations presence in the Central African Republic, the Secretary-General, after consultations with national and international partners, intends to prepare and submit to the Security Council proposals for an integrated mission in the Central African Republic to ensure consistent and coordinated action.

We are thus at a turning point when the Central African Republic must shoulder its responsibilities in facilitating the commitment of the international community to aid it in implementing the priorities set out by the Peacebuilding Commission. To provide the best possible opportunity for the proper implementation of these transformational objectives, peace and security are essential. The actual holding of the political dialogue will without doubt serve as a catalyst to ease the atmosphere, and to promote a relaunching of economic activities and the successful holding of the general elections planned for 2010.

Now that a genuine window of opportunity is opening up for this country, all efforts must now be focused on the holding of this major political forum, which the Central African Republic desires. The international community must also assist the peace process by providing substantial support to the DDR programme provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The stability of the country is at stake here, and it is this that will allow for the advent of peace and sustainable development in the Central African Republic.

The President: I thank Mr. Fall for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Belgium.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the accession of Croatia to the presidency of the Council — an accession that constitutes a historic event for your country — and to assure you of the full support of my delegation during the month of December.

I would now like speak in my capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Over the past few years, the Government of the Central African Republic has focused on restoring stability throughout its territory and launching a process of national reconciliation, although the living conditions of the Central African population remain extremely difficult as a result of insecurity and extreme poverty. This progress has awakened a hope in the international community of seeing the situation in the Central African Republic improve over the coming years. And that hope has in turn awakened a new confidence in the political will of Central African actors.

It is in that context that, last May, the Peacebuilding Commission was entrusted with the responsibility of accompanying the Central African Republic on the road to stabilization. Since then, our configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission has been making rapid progress towards the definition of a strategic framework, expected to be completed in February 2009, which will establish the precise parameters for the joint commitments of the Central African configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central African Government.

The Central African Republic is the fourth country on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we have the opportunity to benefit from the experience of our predecessors. However, the situation in the Central African Republic is of a different scale, when compared to the situations in the other countries on the Peacebuilding Commission agenda. Effectively, this country has just emerged from decades of instability and conflict. The inclusive political dialogue to be launched in Bangui this Friday, 5 December, where I will be present, a few days after the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the Central African Republic, should mark a decisive step towards agreement among all political, economic and social actors and those of civil society. The Peacebuilding Commission is convinced that the Government is aware of the historic importance of this dialogue, and the international community awaits its outcome with interest. The success of this dialogue should see the Central African Republic move from the conflict phase to the post-conflict phase in its development.

I would also like to indicate that, on two occasions over the past few months, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has impressed upon the Central African authorities that this political dialogue must be facilitated. I am convinced that these personal interventions on the part of the Secretary-General have

not been without effect. I would also like to refer to the decisive role of President Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon in the process that led to the launching of these dialogues.

The process of peacebuilding in the Central African Republic is only beginning. That is why the Central African Government and our configuration have focused our talks on a limited number of priorities. Together we have identified three priority areas for peacebuilding, to which Mr. Fall has already referred.

The first is security sector reform, which concerns in-depth reform of those institutions that are crucial for the stability of a democratic State and which includes efforts focused on demobilization, disarmament and the reintegration of politico-military groups. This process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration should be launched as soon as possible after the conclusion of the inclusive political dialogue, on the basis of a plan of action prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). One of the first priorities of the Peacebuilding Commission will be the mobilization of additional resource for this process.

The second priority is good governance and the rule of law, which represent important challenges in this country still suffering from serious human rights violations, insufficient democratic structures, an administrative culture in need of modernization and public services that must do more to reach the population beyond the capital. In close cooperation with Central African authorities, UNDP launched two good-governance programmes in October. The recent human rights report by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) also provides a good platform for cooperation with the Central African authorities. Impunity, too often enjoyed by human rights violators, including members of the armed forces and the police, remains a serious problem.

The third priority is the establishment of focal points for development with the three-fold objective of restoring Government authority throughout the entire territory through a decentralized structure, revitalizing economic areas and improving access to public services in densely populated areas. This concept was developed by the European Commission in cooperation with the Central African Government, which incorporated it into its poverty reduction strategy paper.

During this watershed period, the joint perspectives of the inclusive political dialogue and peacebuilding efforts must not, however, allow us to forget that the presence of a peacekeeping operation continues to be indispensable at this point. Even though the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad is not on our agenda today, I should like to advocate that the European Union Force be replaced at the end of its mandate by troops of a United Nations force in the north-east of the Central African Republic, as the Government has requested. Such measures are necessary until the Central African armed forces are themselves in a position to guarantee security in this part of the territory. In this context, my delegation and the Peacebuilding Commission welcome the transition from the Multinational Force of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (FOMUC) to the Mission for the consolidation of peace (MICOPAX), the regional peacebuilding force of the Economic Community of Central African States.

Faced with the magnitude of these challenges, it is also fundamentally important for the international community and the entire United Nations system to work in an even more concerted fashion, something that our specific configuration will exert itself to achieve. The recent visit to Bangui of a delegation of our configuration enabled us to gauge to what extent it would be desirable for the United Nations in the Central African Republic to be able to speak with one voice and to act in a more coordinated fashion. In this context, the Peacebuilding Commission welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General, set out in his last report on BONUCA, to rapidly issue recommendations for the establishment of an integrated United Nations office in the Central African Republic. That integration is absolutely indispensable. In the meantime, the Peacebuilding Commission supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to prolong BONUCA's mandate for one year with the objectives described in the report.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing the hope represented by the process now underway for the Central African people so long as the necessary will and vision to build a better future are present. Within our formation, national ownership has already been reflected in the identification of peacebuilding

priorities. On the eve of the inclusive political dialogue We welcome the commitment of the Central African Government to put in place the necessary conditions for the work of our special formation.

In order to restore stability and peace throughout all of the territory, the process of political dialogue must be relaunched with the inclusion of all political actors and armed groups. It will, therefore, be necessary, on the one hand, for the international community to support the Government in its efforts and, on the other, for the Government to display genuine political determination in order to build, through joint action, lasting peace in the Central African Republic.

Finally I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador François Fall, and his team in BONUCA for their commitment and their excellent collaboration with my configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now live to invite Council Members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.